

Reflections of different styles of music based on emotions and feelings with high school band

by

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Abstract

The lessons demonstrated in this report show the high school band listening, performing, and reflecting on distinctive styles of music and the way the music makes them feel. Discussions include what makes a piece of music emotional and what about the music develops a sense of happiness, sadness, fear, longing or excitement. Students will listen to the piece of music, play the music, and then reflect on those emotions and ultimately write their own story of what that piece of music means to them.

I designed these lessons for my high school band students based on new ideas I gained from study during my master's program in the area of philosophy and instrumental rehearsal techniques. Two major developments in my teaching are directly due to the ongoing study of advanced rehearsal techniques combined with specific techniques used in all areas of percussion playing as well as the study of history and philosophy in music education.

Through my studies in Rehearsal Techniques, we discussed the fact that music is feelings described in sound and how communication, non-verbal and verbal, is extremely important in rehearsals. Dr. Tracz went over the master teacher perspective in which good teachers tell, excellent teachers explain and demonstrate, and the master teacher inspires. I love that idea and want to become that master teacher for my students. Furthermore, the study of Philosophy in Music Education taught by Dr. Payne, really got me thinking about the way my students think and interact with music. I discovered that my teaching style reflects the thoughts of Bennett Reimer and Elliott Eisner the most. I agree with Eisner in thinking that arts educate the whole child and Reimer's idea of music education existing to make musical experiences in all their various manifestations available to all people.

Before I decided to get my master's degree I did not think about students' emotions, feelings and thoughts about the music very often. I was concerned about technique, correct notes and rhythms and intonation. It has now become clear that studying these reactions about music in all my band classes benefit the students overall mental health as well as mine.

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Chapter 1: Teaching Philosophy

What is the Purpose of Education?

This question is difficult to answer for many reasons and for many people. Teachers, administrators, community leaders, students, and parents all have trouble putting into words what the purpose of education truly is. It encompasses a vast array of information. How does one create a short statement that will cover it all? The purpose of education has changed and evolved over the last 100-150 years due to the needs of society. It has gone from “instructing youth in religious doctrine to preparing them to live in a democracy, to assimilating immigrants into mainstream society, to preparing workers for the industrialized 20th century workplace” (Wilcox, 2021, para.4). Now, as educators prepare young people for their futures and the rapidly changing world what is our goal? To create lifelong learners? To create emotionally and mentally stable adults? To create people who can compete in a global economy? To be contributing members of their community? Yes. Yes, to all the above.

I believe the purpose of education is to prepare young people for the rapidly changing world around them by creating emotionally stable adults who can be a contributing member of their society, compete in a global economy and who are experts at civic skills like respecting others, working together in ways that are fair and being a hardworking citizen that is a lifelong learner. I believe in the last five years and perhaps longer, our society’s actions prove we have a very long way to go. This is a huge job, a big undertaking, and teachers cannot do it alone. Parents, friends, community members and churches can all play a part in the role and purpose of education.

Why Music Education?

We have read and researched about the way music education got its start in public schools through the Singing School movement. Music education was important to the general public and most of the Singing School masters became music teachers and their tune books started as their curriculum (Mark & Gary, 2007). Music education has been important for over 100 years. Music education has immense value, and it is extremely important for ALL children to learn. It leads to better brain development, increases the human connection, relieves stress, integrates many different subjects, and teaches discipline among other things (Wilson, 2017).

When I think about the reason I teach music I cannot help but think about my music educators over the years. They were the kind of people I aspired to be. I think back and ask the question why? Why are Elise Peterson, Suellen Stenger, Kurt Gartner, Scott Lubaroff and Frank Tracz people that I want to emulate? The answer is because of music. I honestly believe that music makes us better people. Music is an outlet; we are free to express what we feel inside through music. It helps us to understand culture and people better, it helps us be empathetic. Science says there are six ways that music makes us better people, and those six ways have everything to do with emotion and health. Music can further our creativity and make us happy, generous people. Heal the World or Is This Love are two songs that give us the intent to help others, they have a subliminal effect on our behavior. Musicians tend to have better auditory memory and attention, making them better learners. Music can have a range of physical benefits. According to this study, music can reduce heart rate, blood pressure and anxiety in heart disease patients. Music can even make us more accepting of one's differences. (Bhattacharya, 2018).

Other attributes of these fine educators are hardworking, reliable, kind, compassionate, good listeners, good communicators, energetic, talented, tough, committed, leaders, and they

never give up. These attributes are the characteristics of success! Why would anyone not want to be like this? I also teach music for many personal reasons. I love making music. I enjoy the challenge and the variety of teaching band. There is never a day that is the same. I love working with young people, their energy and zeal for life is contagious and their goofiness is fun, I truly enjoy working with teenagers. Every day is interesting with the melting pot of personalities that are in one single ensemble. It is a team effort and I love teaching the life lessons and leadership that it takes to become a good team.

What is the Purpose of Music in Schools?

“I need band Mrs. Shelton, please tell me we can participate in band this year,” says one of my incoming senior saxophone students. She continues, “I need to be with everyone and work hard on the field and on my music and feel normal again.” This statement is the epitome of why music should always be included in public education and certainly during the unknown world that Covid-19 brought us through this past school year. Music gives students a sense of who they are and what it is like to be a whole person. The music class becomes a second family where everyone is included, and everyone belongs. As I mentioned before, it teaches life lessons, lessons that students will not get anywhere else. When you participate in music, you become responsible for yourself. No one else is going to practice your instrument for you. It teaches you to be on time, “if you’re early you’re on time, if you’re on time you’re late, if you’re late, you’re left” (Tracz, F. personal communication, August 1997). You must practice until your work is perfect – even if that means repeating the same section over and over again. In band, “one more time” *never* actually meant “one more time.” We practiced until we got the music right because there are no shortcuts to success. “In life, you have to give your work everything you’ve got” (Robinson, 2020, para 3). Music teaches commitment, if you cannot commit to practices,

competitions, and games you let people down. Music teaches that there is more to life than success, the journey is just as important as the destination.

In today's society it seems as though we have an abundance of poor mental health, a lack of self-worth and self-confidence. For this reason alone, music should always be included in public education. NAFME posted 20 Important Benefits of Music in Our Schools in July of 2014, and out of the 20 benefits, at least five can help mental health. Those five benefits included better self-confidence, stress management, a sense of achievement, and success in society that builds emotional development which can lead to high self-esteem and the ability to cope with anxiety (NAFME, 2014).

My Music Education Philosophy

My music education philosophy tends to lean toward Elliot Eisner's philosophy the most. Eisner believed that serious study and practice of an artistic discipline was the most effective way for children to learn. "Children learn how to perceive and explore relationships, how to think and express within constraints and a set of rules, that there are many different and completely valid ways to be in the world and that some activities are self-justifying and important for their own reasons" (Eisner, 1991, p.10). Many of Eisner's thoughts and feelings on this topic are like Bennett Reimer's philosophy. Reimer says, "music belongs to basic education because musical experiences are necessary for all people if their essential humanness is to be realized" (Mark & Reimer, 2003, p. 7).

As an educator, my job is to provide a safe and welcoming environment for students. This is especially important so that students feel free to make mistakes but also feel free to be themselves. An environment that I can prepare students to be productive members of society as well as learn to love making music. My job is to teach life lessons through music. I will engage

them in activities that require patience, perseverance, responsibility, creativity, flexibility, discipline, hard work and being tough. These characteristics will lead to high self-esteem and self-worth. They will understand the meaning of success and what it takes to be successful.

One of my favorite memories of teaching band had an array of emotions attached to it. Two years ago, tragedy struck our band, we lost two band students in one year due to a car accident and a suicide. It was a terribly sad year for our students and me, but we made it through that tough time with music. One of my senior students who is accomplished in composition wrote a piece and dedicated it to the students we lost. Our wind ensemble learned the piece. The student composer taught his piece and conducted it at our final concert that year. I played French Horn in my “student’s band” as that was the instrument the young lady played, and my assistant played trumpet which was the young man’s instrument. We had the glorious job of representing our students that had passed. As I sat on the stage waiting for the downbeat, I felt nervous, I wanted to play well. I felt proud of my student composer and all the kids that surrounded me within the band anxiously awaiting to play the song to remember their friends by. I felt sadness at the loss of two young lives, gone way too soon. The meaning behind the piece was described to the crowd and to the families of the students that had passed away before the song was played. Then the downbeat came, and the song was played. It went very well. At the end I looked around the stage, there were smiles and there were tears. We looked at the crowd and they were standing and clapping. I am sitting here smiling through the tears. That is why I teach music.

How My Philosophy Informs My Teaching

“Children learn how to perceive and explore relationships, how to think and express within constraints and a set of rules, that there are many different and completely valid ways to be in the world and that some activities are self-justifying and important for their own reasons”

(Eisner, 1991, p. 8). This is a statement from Elliot Eisner and my philosophy revolves around this very thought. Music gives students a sense of who they are and fulfills the whole person including their emotions and feelings. The lesson demonstrated in this report show the high school band listening, performing, and reflecting on different styles of music and the way the music makes them feel. Discussions include what makes a piece of music emotional and what about the music develops a sense of happiness, sadness, fear, longing or excitement. The example that I mentioned earlier about playing alongside my own high school band and the wide variety of emotions that ran through me and noticeably everyone else on the stage and in the room, is a prime example of why music education is justified and important to everyone for their own reasons. It was so clear and obvious that day that I wish I could have captured the moment and saved it for eternity.

I want every student of mine to have an experience like that, and better yet, have multiple experiences like that, each to his own, for his or her own purposes. I want them to truly understand why music can do this to our minds and bodies and in what ways can we perform and create to share this experience with the audience and others sitting within the ensemble. That is not taught in one lesson or in one day but over a period of time. That time starts when they are just beginning their musical adventure, perhaps in beginning band or through private lessons. After a student learns the instrument, how to produce a nice tone, the notes and rhythms, dynamics, and symbols, then they can begin to take the music further. How can my tone create a sense of wonder or fear? How do those dynamics surprise or excite the listener? How can the dissonance in the woodwind choir produce a sense of remembrance and sadness? These are all questions and thoughts we had in class during the lesson and prior to the lesson that we talked about and explored. Teaching this way must start early for students to understand the true

meaning behind Georgia Cates quote “music is what feelings sound like.” It doesn’t happen all the time, and it shouldn’t, but when it does, it gives the performer and the listener so many reasons to keep performing and to keep listening over and over again.

I believe as a music educator my job is to teach life lessons through music. I also believe that I can only do that when they fully trust me, and to fully trust me I must build a relationship with that student by being true to my word, communicating effectively and taking small steps with each student. I must be honest and consistent and listen actively. I also think authentic kindness builds trust. Then there are feelings. Being open about my emotions and showing that I care helps build trust (Buckley, 2020). I can teach and demonstrate all those things through music. What an awesome profession I am in!

Chapter 2: Lesson Plan

2014 Music National Standards

In this lesson we used the standards of Create, Perform and Respond

Create: Students improvising, composing, or creating new musical ideas.

*Students were imagining and creating musical ideas for the purpose of expressing feeling when playing music for themselves and for their audience.

Perform: Instruction that encourages students to perform.

*Students performed two different ways while thinking of different things. each time in an emotional context

Respond: Instruction that results in students responding to music with critical thought.

*After the students played through the excerpt of the music, I asked them to respond to what they heard or felt. We noted the differences between the two performances. (NAfME, 2014).

Prior Knowledge/Skills

Students in my Wind Ensemble class are the best high school band musicians in the school, so they come with a lot of prior knowledge. They play at the proficient to accomplished level performing pieces of music at grade level 3 and 4. During the year we went back to the basics and built the knowledge level back up due to many months off during the pandemic. They know notes, rhythms, dynamics, tone, balance, etc....so I often work on the higher order thinking skills with this class.

Rehearsal Objective

The objective of this rehearsal was to make students think about why they play a certain piece of music. I want them to explore why they like or dislike the music, to get in touch with their feelings and emotions when playing their instrument with other people. Ultimately what do they need to do as a performer to extend these thoughts and emotions to the audience while playing a certain piece.

Assessment of the Rehearsal

The rehearsal went well, the performance of the piece improved from the first time to the second time. The first time we played the excerpt from *Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing* arranged by Randall Standridge (2014) I told them absolutely nothing about the emotion of the piece or the context, we were just running it to “work” on it. The second time through the piece I prepped them with a possible meaning behind the piece, prompted them to think about a memory that the piece conjured up and had them play the excerpt again. It definitely made a difference. There was more dynamic contrast, better tone, and simply more thought put into what they were doing.

Table 2.1.*Rehearsal Plan*

Time	Activity	Purpose of Activity	Sequence	Assessment
8:18	Introduction	Explaining the purpose of the lesson	1	Students attentively listening
8:23	Lecture of emotion with quotes	Background of why music can be emotional	2	Students gave thoughts on why music is emotional
8:25	Warm-up scale	Get lips going before we rehearse excerpt	3	Warmed up sufficiently enough for lesson
8:27	What emotions music can convey	Get students thinking about why they play their instrument like they do. What appeal is there for the audience and yourselves?	4	Students named emotions such as nostalgic, excitement, solemn, sad, sentimental, anxious, fun, happy, think of the movie they are portraying
8:30	Play excerpt of Come Thou Fount without explanation	To play the excerpt of my choice without explanation to see how it was played	5	Students did what was asked, many technical problems but not the point today.

8:35	Play excerpt again but this time prep them on what to think about while playing the piece	See if there are any musical changes from the first time playing the piece to this time.	6	More confident, played with more of a purpose, there were bigger swells, it meant more to the kids this time around.
8:40	Reflection	Do you play better when you think about why you are playing?	7	Students said they personally play much better when they think about the emotional background of the piece.
8:44	Prep and play excerpt from Great Locomotive	What are the different feelings and emotions of this piece and why?	8	Class was ending but there was an obvious change of emotion with that piece, and they stated that before the piece began. We also mentioned the historical background of the piece.

Reflections of the Lesson

The objective of this rehearsal was to make students think about why they play a certain piece of music. I want them to explore why they like or dislike the music, to get in touch with their feelings and emotions when playing their instrument with other people. What do they need to do as a performer to extend these thoughts and emotions to the audience while playing a certain piece? Ultimately by doing this with more advanced students there is the hope that the ensemble will sound better, play together with correct notes and rhythms, with pure tone and balance and intonation. When students care about the piece they are playing and why they are playing it, they will want the fundamentals to be there and to be good. It all ties together and the finished product will be wonderful and unique.

Hopefully during this process, the students learn to think deeper about specific parts of the music, for example, what makes the part at measure 38 sound sad and realize that they are the third of the chord there and their instrument is what is making the chord minor and initially making it sound sad or somber. Or perhaps they learned during *The Great Locomotive Chase* (Smith, 2000) that a song sounds more powerful and exciting when the ensemble is exactly together and precise. Then they can transfer that knowledge from that moment to a snare drum line in marching band, the more together and clean the snare line is, the more powerful they become.

In this lesson I spent about half the time lecturing and asking for responses to questions regarding the emotional value of music and specific pieces. I asked them what emotions came to mind when listening to certain pieces and they listed a number of different emotions including,

nostalgic, sad, somber, happy, excited, tense, anxious, fun, sentimental and solemn. We talked about what brings on those responses and had a good time of question and answer. I then moved on to the rehearsal section of the lesson. We did a short warm up and then played the same excerpt of *Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing* arranged by Randall Standridge (2014) two times. The first time I told them to start at measure 36 and play to the end and try to play it well, and that is the only prep I gave them. After we played the excerpt the first time, we reflected on what sounded good and what needed work, very typical of a rehearsal on any piece. Then I asked the ensemble to play the same excerpt again, only this time think of something that you never want to forget, it is a person or a moment in time, or a pet or a favorite item from childhood and play the excerpt again. After the second time through, we reflected on what we heard, and all the students concluded that the second time was overall a better run of the excerpt. I asked them why, and got a resounding response, “Because you made us think of a person, thing, or time that meant something to us and we played with more emotion. When we play with more emotion we connect more with the sound and our instruments and the listener.”

The only assessment I used in this particular lesson reflected what the students heard after they played. We assessed the music on the spot each time. Sometimes I will do the assessing and report that to my students and sometimes I will make them self-assess, in this case they did a self-assessment and a comparison of *Come Thou Fount* (Standridge, 2014) and a short self-assessment of *The Great Locomotive Chase*. (Smith, 2000).

I really enjoyed talking with the students about the background of both pieces and having them do the majority of the reflecting on the pieces. I will incorporate this kind of lesson more often. I believe this type of lesson would be good with every piece at the beginning stages of learning and towards the end of learning the piece. You could then reflect on how the piece of

music may have changed over the period of weeks that it was rehearsed and why it changed. Is it because the students now think differently about the piece, so they are playing it differently, or is it because the ensemble is playing better now and that is simply why the piece has changed for the better? Once a class has sat through the lecture of emotions and how they affect music, the lecture will not have to be done again, that will make the lesson more concise and quicken the process so more rehearsing and reflecting can be done.

It always amazes me when I videotape a lesson how it changes me as a teacher for the better. The question remains, why do I not videotape my lessons more so that I become a better teacher? The answer is it is scary! I do not like to see myself on camera and I do not like the way I sound, but if I force myself to watch the videos, I always learn something about myself and the way I teach and conduct. In this lesson, I repeated myself a little too much and I answered my own questions too often instead of using a bit more wait time. I use my left hand more than I should when conducting and it can sometimes become a distraction and the big moments are not as big because the left hand is overdone. I also took away some positives such as my students are great listeners and are attentive to the things that I am saying. Knowing that, I could rehearse more and think about shorter things to say that make an enormous impact because they will get it. I also have learned not to fear that camera, use it, and become better!

Chapter 3: Reflections of My Growth and Development as a Student

When reflecting on my time at K-State doing my master's degree I cannot help but think back a little further to when I spent five years on campus doing my bachelor's degree in Music Education. Unlike many who work on their master's degree shortly after they have attained their bachelor's degree, I on the other hand waited 16 years!

I walked the campus as a college freshman in the fall of 1997 after leaving my very small town of Garnett, Kansas. I felt so small and wondered if anyone would notice me. My first encounter with K-State was my college visit in February of 1997 when I met Dr. Anthony DiSanza, the percussion professor at the time. Then, I met Dr. Frank Tracz who sealed the deal on me wanting to be a K-State Wildcat! He was positive, energetic, funny and I could tell by the way he talked to me and my parents, that he was a “go-getter!” I was right! The next five years went by very quickly! I stayed very busy taking 18-22 hours every semester and even summer courses to stay on track. I was in every ensemble imaginable and took piano and percussion lessons every week. My years during my undergrad were formative, fun, unforgettable and dare I say fast?

I learned so much about myself during that time and about family and about good friends and bad food. I realized that I need to study more than the night before for history and psychology class and cramming a piano solo to get it memorized really does not work. I also learned that blood, sweat and tears will make a really good marching band and that I was

stronger than I knew. I learned that a little bit, or a lot of nerves before a big solo performance is a good thing if you can keep your mallets from shaking and get over that queasy stomach long enough to step into the spotlight and do your thing. I also learned that student

teaching contains invaluable lessons that I certainly appreciated very much during my first few years on the job. Wow, what a time I had! I miss it in so many ways, but then I realize, I would not want to be a college student forever, I would never get to teach the wonderful students that I have today.

After graduating with my Bachelor's in Music Education in the spring of 2002, I applied for many band director jobs and really got the chance of a lifetime for a very "green" band director, not to mention the first ever female band director at Independence High School. I was only the sixth director they had ever had. That says a lot about the school district! I started with 35 in my high school band and around 45 in grades 6-8 in the fall of 2002 and met Mr. Don Farthing, a retired band director, who taught in Independence from 1977-1997. He became my mentor and good friend and still is to this day. I do not know what I would do without him. With his help, along with many others, and a lot of hard work and countless hours we have grown the band to 115 in the high school today and 150 in the 6-8 grade program. We have settled into these numbers, and I am having a wonderful time teaching and conducting in this school district.

Four years ago, I decided that it was time for me to begin my Master's Degree in Music Education and I thought about switching universities and going somewhere else but it had been so many years since my bachelors that I was very nervous to go back to school as an "older student" and I knew K-State was a great university and I "knew" the program so I am a Wildcat again, gladly!

The first summer of my master's was 2018 and it was in the true hybrid format with online classes and a week of in-person, on campus learning. I loved that, it was a great mix of online work and then meeting face to face and talking about things as a class. During that summer I took Theories of Music Teaching, History of the Wind Band, Organization and

Administration of the School Music Program and Concert and Ethnic Percussion Techniques. I met Dr. Payne for the first time as a professor during Theories of Music Teaching. As I reread my personal learning theory which I called “Communities of Learning through Natural and Social Interactions” defined as groups of people who share a passion and knowledge of a subject and learn more about that subject by watching and learning from others who are more knowledgeable. I remembered that this is the Social Development Theory and I do agree with that, but over the last couple of years I have come a long way in my thinking of teaching and learning. From the Social Development Theory to thoughts by Bennett Reimer such as “music belongs to basic education because musical experiences are necessary for all people if their essential humanness is to be realized” (Mark & Reimer, 2003, p. 14).

During that same summer I learned more about the history of band than I ever knew before. It was interesting and developed a new pride for band that I once had but lost a bit over the years of trying to build a program. I went back to basics after that summer and had the best marching show and overall year that I had ever had. That was thanks to the master's program that lit a new fire under me, the desire to be better and to work harder. I had gotten burned out from teaching, but my passion was back.

The summer of 2019 was to be my second summer of my master's degree, but I had my third child, Caleb Benjamin on June 24th so I took that summer off to be a new mom all over again. I picked up where I left off in the summer of 2020. Thankfully, despite the world-wide pandemic, K-State still managed to virtually have a master's program in the summer. It was a new challenge for everyone, but we were all in it together. Last summer I took five classes and realized very quickly that was biting off more than I could chew, but the KSU professors had a lot of grace and patience and I made it through! I took History and Philosophy of Music,

Intro to Graduate Studies, Advanced Instrumental Rehearsal Techniques, Arranging for Bands and Jazz and Marching Percussion Techniques. Dr. Tracz's class about advanced rehearsal techniques was a good refresher on some of the things I had been doing, but also gave me lots of new ideas to add to my bag of tricks. I am very excited to use more of those ideas in the upcoming school year when things are "back to normal" so to speak.

This past year, all band directors everywhere were trying their best to teach music six feet apart and with bags on the bells and spray on the sticks to disinfect. We were attempting to give lessons over zoom and doing everything in our power not to be quarantined or better yet, not to get frustrated. We made it through the longest school year ever and we all are better because of it. I know for a fact that I am more sympathetic now than I was before, I have more patience and less frustration. The phrase "it will be what it will be" was used often and "be flexible" was heard around the clock. Dr. Payne's History and Philosophy of Music Education really challenged me because I knew very little about philosophers going into the class, however I learned a lot about myself and how my own philosophy has changed over the last 19 years of teaching. It has moved more from a "by the book," strict, you must do it this way, detail-oriented director to more of passionate, emotional "let's try it this way" director. Both types have their place, but I feel like I know which side to bring out at what time a lot better now than I did before. The arranging class of Dr. Wimmer's was challenging to me as far as technology is concerned, but I do have an ear for arranging. I just need to become more familiar with the Finale music writing program and not be afraid to try things.

This summer is my third and final summer to complete my master's degree. I am grateful that I am almost done but very thankful for everything I have learned and blessed to be learning from some of the best.

Why do I continue to teach music? Music to me is a fun, challenging way of teaching life skills and how to be a better person. Teaching music has taught me how to express my feelings through sound and I want my students to experience that same feeling.

It is a beautiful profession.

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